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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001347

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [NI](#) [DARFUR](#)

SUBJECT: SANCTIONS/DARFUR DEMARCHE DELIVERED; MINDEF ALSO
TALKS ABOUT POLIO, U.S. OUTREACH TO MUSLIMS

REF: STATE 155894

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN CAMPBELL FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary. The Ambassador delivered reftel demarche to the Minister of Defense, who was optimistic the President would deliver the requested speech on military accountability, but he had not spoken to the President regarding Nigeria's role in the Darfur peacekeeping mission. The Minister, who was defeated in the 2003 Kano State governor's election, also spoke freely to the Ambassador about the polio vaccine boycott there, and the need for greater U.S. outreach to the Muslim community of the north. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On August 3, Minister of Defense Dr. Rabi Kwankwaso summoned the Ambassador to a meeting at the Ministry. Also present at the meeting were Minister of State Dr. Rowland Oritsejafor, Special Assistant to the Minister of Defense Dr. Hafiz Abubakar, and Poloff (notetaker).

13. (C) Kwankwaso had just returned from a meeting in the U.S. with A/S Newman. He said they had discussed the 2001 Zaki-Biam ("Benue") massacre again, along with Nigeria's role in the Darfur peacekeeping mission. Kwankwaso told the Ambassador that he was concerned about the enduring Zaki-Biam issue because Nigeria's relationship with the U.S. is "excellent," insisting that President Obasanjo is doing everything that could possibly be done (and "doesn't sleep" over Zaki-Biam, he added).

14. (C) The Ambassador said that there are indications that congressional opinions were moving toward support for restoration of the U.S.-Nigeria military training relationship, as in both countries' interest. The Ambassador delivered the requested talking points on military accountability, explaining that while nevertheless there was no guarantee sanctions would be lifted, Nigeria's action would provide positive signals.

15. (C) Kwankwaso responded by immediately suggesting possible venues for the military accountability speech to be delivered, and asked if Obasanjo needed to deliver it himself, or whether he could send the speech to be delivered by someone else on his behalf. The Ambassador answered that it was important for the President himself to deliver the speech. Kwankwaso said he would draft a paragraph and show it to the president. He was "happy," he said, and he expected the President to be happy too. The Ambassador offered talking points (reftel) to assist with drafting the speech, which Poloff delivered to Kwankwaso's office shortly after the meeting.

16. (SBU) On Darfur, Kwankwaso said he had not met with Obasanjo since Kwankwaso's return from the U.S., but he knows that Obasanjo is not happy with the situation there and feels that it must be stopped. Kwankwaso promised to contact the Ambassador again after meeting with Obasanjo.

17. (C) When the Ambassador mentioned his upcoming visit to Kano August 4-6, Kwankwaso, who was defeated in the 2003 Kano State governor's election, freely shared his impressions of Kano Governor Shekarau's handling of the polio vaccination campaign. He said that Shekarau had a tiger by the tail with the polio vaccine boycott, shaping public opinion by speaking against the vaccine for some ten months for frivolous reasons, then expecting the public to follow his direction when he reversed course and said the vaccine was safe. To support his theory, Kwankwaso said that in the Kano State village where the vaccination campaign recently restarted, two people were killed in community violence, an incident not reported by newspapers. Shekarau, he said, had had no contact with Westerners from primary school through his university years, so his worldview was limited. Comment: Shekarau, a member of the opposition All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) and a surprise winner over the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) gubernatorial candidate Kwankwaso in 2003, has been a thorn in the side of Obasanjo and the PDP since his election. End Comment.

18. (C) A native of north Nigeria, Kwankwaso supported the American Corners opening in Kano because the U.S. needed to have a greater presence in the north. In Kwankwaso's

childhood, he had an American schoolteacher, and there were other Americans around the north, including the Peace Corps and the Voluntary Service Organization (VSO). Now there is little U.S. contact with the north, and others have filled the vacuum with anti-U.S. propaganda. While there are no "extremists" in Nigeria, he said, and no one "willing to put a bomb on his body," Kwankwaso wondered whether the lack of Western contact would leave future generations of Nigerians susceptible to terrorist recruiting. Kwankwaso told the Ambassador he should "tell Washington to send more money," because it is "disheartening to see young men misled."

19. (SBU) The Ambassador said he had had preliminary conversations with Vice President Atiku regarding the reintroduction of Peace Corps to Nigeria, and was waiting for an invitation from Nigeria to the Peace Corps. Kwankwaso said he would talk to the President about asking the Ministry of Education to write the invitation. The Ambassador said he would meet with Atiku again upon Atiku's return from his U.S. vacation in about three weeks.

10. (C) Comment. While the reception from Kwankwaso was positive and encouraging, he is clearly not a member of Obasanjo's inner circle. Nonetheless, he seemed certain that Obasanjo would be receptive to the idea of giving a public statement on military accountability, so the Embassy might finally be able to report some progress by the GON on the nagging Zaki-Biam issue. End Comment.
CAMPBELL